

Chapter 94

Everyone finally leaves us with a plan set in place that everyone seems content with... except for me. There's no good way to just say "I don't want to be the Queen" though, especially when you've been fully aware that your mate is the prince and you willingly let him mark you.

I sigh deeply and begin to gather the dishes off the table, taking them across the hall into the kitchen where Anna and the chef we had met earlier are seated talking. They both rise quickly as I enter and bow.

"Princess, I can take those," Anna says, walking over, but I shake my head at her.

"Thanks, but I want to," I say, placing them in the sink and beginning to wash them.

The chef walks over to me and opens a dishwasher. "Here, let me help you," he says, trying to take one from me but I don't let go and step in front of him to put it in myself. He looks up at the door helplessly to Seth, who just shakes his head at them.

"You're dismissed for the evening," he says but before they can leave he adds to it. "I know you both overheard things. As always, your utmost discretion is required. Nothing you overheard tonight should be spoken about to anyone."

"Yes, of course," they both tell him and with a bow, they leave us alone.

Seth moves over to sit down at the bar at the island as I continue to frantically clean, unsure what else to do with myself. After the dishes are loaded in the dishwasher, I take a deep breath and decide to make some muffins. I walk to the pantry, gathering the things I need and then to the refrigerator for the rest.

"Molly, please talk to me," he says cautiously, but I don't say a word. "Molly," he says again.

I look up, my eyes full of tears and I can see how worried he is just from his face. "I can't do this," I whisper. "I can't be a queen. I still don't even know who I am."

Seth stands up and walks around, taking the bowl I'm holding from my hands and lifting me up to sit on the counter. He pushes my legs so he can stand in between them and cups my face gently with his large hands.

"What do you mean that you don't know who you are?" he asks me gently.

"I... I don't know how to explain it. I became a chef so I could help my pack, because I didn't have a wolf. In just four weeks I became a princess, got my wolf, found my magic, used my magic, woke up in a palace, shifted... and now I can't be a chef, but I'm becoming Queen in another four weeks," I tell him, tears falling. "I don't know how to be any of that. I can't even use my magic without knocking myself unconscious."

"Molly," Seth says, pulling me into his chest and letting me cry. "I'm sorry. I didn't realize just how overwhelmed you were. I'm so sorry. We can try to keep you here hidden for longer, to get a little more time."

I snuffle into his chest, tears still flowing. "I don't think I realized how overwhelmed I am, until it all just became too much. I want to go, I want to do this, but I'm not good enough."

"You are, though. You are so much more than enough," he tells me, pushing my head back to gently hold it so I'm looking into his eyes. "You're my world, Molly. Everything, EVERYTHING begins and ends with you. You have so much to offer the kingdom, but in ways that they don't realize they need. I love you so much, so much."

"Can I come to the office with you tomorrow?" I ask meekly. "I... I don't know what I'm supposed to do."

"Of course. Mom is dying to show you around," he tells me with a smile. "Dad doesn't want us around when he announces the new law, so we can go early and head back up around lunch."

"OK. I'm still going to make muffins, though. It helps me think," I tell him and he leans forward to kiss my forehead gently.

He cups my face again and looks me in the eyes. "What else do you need to think about?"

"I... I'm not ready to talk about that," I whisper.

He nods, but looks very displeased. "I'm trying here, Molly. But if I've done something, I need you to talk to me about it."

"I, just..." I look down, trying my hardest not to look into his eyes. He releases my face, but his hands move to my hip making it clear that he'll let me look away, but I'm not leaving without talking this through. "I thought I was OK with the other girls, but when Anna was afraid of me, I realized I'm not. I just need some time to think, because I'm not exactly sure what I feel, but I know that it's not great."

I see his shoulders visibly slump, clearly disappointed. "If I could take it all back, I would. You're truly all that matters to me."

"I know, I believe you," I tell him and he reaches up to wipe the tears off my face. "I just need some time to bake, and think, and feel normal for a moment."

"I assume that you would like to be alone for this," he says, but it's more of a question.

I nod at him, feeling bad about it. "I'm sorry," I whisper.

"You don't have anything to apologize for. I'm going to go to my office up here. If you need me, I'll be just down the hall," he says and kisses me on the cheek before helping me down from the counter. "Just link me when you're done, or if you need anything at all. I love you."

"I love you," I tell him and wrap my arms tightly around him, inhaling his scent deeply, knowing that it always helps to calm me. "I'm sorry. There's just so much going through my mind. I just..."

"It's OK, Love," he tells me, kissing my forehead and holding me close, almost protectively. I can tell through the bond that he really doesn't want to leave me, but he's trying to give me the space I need so that I can think. He releases me and leaves me alone in the kitchen and my heart sinks a little as I hear the main door close.

I know I asked him for a little space, but now that I have it, I just feel so alone. I sigh deeply. I don't even know where to begin with my thoughts, so I ignore them and begin with my muffins.

They're my dad's favorites, and one of the first things I learned to make by myself. I begin to measure out the wheat flour and oats along with the other dry ingredients.

Why does it bother me so much? It's something that seems like it would be simple to answer, but it's not. I knew about his choices before, and I was OK with it. Well, not OK, but I was able to forgive it. I didn't have a wolf, so I can understand his hesitation with me. He didn't think I would make a good queen without a wolf. Now I have a wolf and I'm the one that thinks I won't be a good queen.

I peel and smash a banana, mixing in an egg and melted butter. My dad doesn't like cinnamon, but I do, and... well... I really don't know if Seth does. I add it in, because I want to. I mix in some dried fruit and sugar and then combine the dry ingredients to make my muffins. Once mixed well, I line my tins and fill them with the mixture and pop the pan into the oven.

I open a bottle of wine and pour a glass, sitting down at the bar while I wait for the muffins to bake. Seth didn't think I would be a good queen, and he looked for someone who he thought would. The only thing I know about any of these girls was that one of them was mean and scared the maid. Maybe all of them, since she seemed to think I would be as well.

"That's it," I mutter to myself. "It's because the only thing I know about them is they were mean, and that Seth thought they would make a better queen than me."

I sigh deeply. It's the unknown that bothers me. Why did he think any of them would be a good queen? Why did he eventually move on from one to the next? Was it just Altair keeping him from choosing any of them? He told me before that he tried to mark one of them. What made him want her?

Thankfully, my timer dings and I stand up, walking over and pulling the muffins out of the oven. I pull out a cooling rack and move them onto that and then turn and pour myself another glass of wine.

Do you want any wine?

No thank you, Love.

Picking up my glass that's now full again, I leave our home and walk down the hall, following the scent of my mate until I find the door to his office and knock.

"Come in," I hear and I crack the door, sticking my head in.

"Is it alright if I join you in here?" I ask him and he sits back in his chair behind a large desk, sitting down some papers and lifting a glass with some brown liquid in it.

"Of course," he says with a tired smile. "You never have to ask. You're always welcome in here."

I walk in, quietly closing the door behind me and I walk over, sitting on the desk beside where he's been working. "You tried to find someone who would be a better queen than me," I say to him and instantly his face is marred with regret. I reach out and he takes my hand. "I'm not mad. I get it. I didn't have a wolf and your mate has to be queen. But why did you think they would be better? What made you think any of them would be a good queen?"

"Molly," he says and rubs his thumb on the back of my hand. "I don't want to hurt you. They were all mistakes. Stupid, misguided, mistakes."

"You marked me, and I marked you," I tell him with a smile. "I just need to know, because the only thing that I do know is that one of them was mean to the maid."

Seth drains the rest of the liquid in his glass and stands, walking to a cabinet across the room and reaches for a bottle, refilling his glass before he turns back to me.